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# Editorial

### The Aligarh Birdwatchers

The Centre for Wildlife and Ornithology of the Aligarh Muslim University seem to be doing a lot of interesting field work. Several Scientists from the AMU came to the OSI Meeting at Pusa, Delhi in November 1995. The article by Ms Orus Illyas reminds us what a delightful place Corbett is for birding and I hope the author is certain about the identification of the birds listed. Birds of the genus Phylloscopus have led to quarrels among experts and all we can do is to accept these records in good faith - recalling what I said in the January Newsletter that to make a mistake is not a great sin - provided one is prepared to be corrected.

### Asian Wetland News

From the message from Faizal Parish, the Executive Director of AWB, in the Sept 95 issue of Asian Wetland News, reported in the issue, it appears that with its new connections this organisation is likely to play an even more important role in saving the wetlands of the world. I hope India too can profit from its operations.

Reported from AWN is a note on 'Mystery Marked Waterbirds' 'by Taej Mundkur. I was also interested in the article on the Pong Dam Lake by Sanjeeva Pandey of the WLI of India, Dehra Dun 248 001. In the Newsletter for Birdwatchers July/August issue of 1989 (Vol.XXIX) the author had written a shorter article on the rich bird life of this area.

**M. Krishnan**

When I became Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Natural History Society in the early sixties, I had much to do with M. Krishnan who was a Member of the Advisory Committee of the BNHS. I had not met him personally till then, but his well written letters and caustic comments on the misdeeds of the Forest Department and others in destroying India's natural resources, and to use his own words 'its special quiddity' were always a pleasure to receive.

During one of my visits to Delhi I met Miss Padmaja Naidu, who was then the Chairman of the Jawaharlal Nehru Trust, and I suggested to her that Krishnan should be given a Nehru Fellowship to write about India's wildlife. She accepted the idea immediately and asked me to process it through the BNHS. As a result Krishnan started work on "India's Wildlife" and the book remains a valuable addition on the subject.

Later I was in touch with him on the Steering Committee of Project Tiger. I thought that his insistence on the incompatibility between even limited tourism in natural areas and the existence of wildlife, was taking things a bit too far, but Krishnan was not a man to compromise on his principles.

We invited him to spend some time with us in Bombay and then took him to Kihim where Salim Ali was also present. Both of them being strong-willed, and people with pre-determined views on many aspects of conservation and natural history, did not get on too well I thought. But Krishnan loved Kihim and in the family visitors' book he made a beautiful sketch of the seascape with coconut palms in the foreground. He also managed to take an excellent photograph of the brown wood owl which was hooting high up on a casuarina tree. On returning to Bombay I took Krishnan to meet Sumant Moolgaokar in his lovely house in Lonavala. Sumant was himself a highly skilled photographer and had expressed a desire to meet Krishnan. As soon as we entered the gate Sumant got into a technical discussion about black and white photography and Krishnan responded by saying "not so fast, not so fast". That was a signal for Sumant to change the subject and we spent a very pleasant morning. Krishnan's matchless writing on natural history, particularly his fortnightly column in the Statesman, will be greatly missed by present and future generations.

**Whistling Teal**

It is very creditable that Kaushid Deuti and his companions were able to identify four greater whistling teal in a flock of 6000 lesser whistling teal.

I see from A New Dictionary of Birds by Sir Landsborough Thomson that Teal is a substantive name, unchanged in plural. I also learn that the Dendrocygni are confined to the tropics, show no sexual dimorphism, both sexes incubate the eggs, dive freely for food and indulge in mutual preening.

About the larger whistling teal (formerly known as Dendrocygna fulva) Hugh Whistler in his Popular Handbook of Indian Birds, says "The larger whistling teal has a remarkable distribution in India, Burma and Ceylon, Africa and Central and South America. In our area it seems to be common only in India and Ceylon. Strange that the lesser whistling teal so abundant in India and South East Asia, is absent from Africa and Central and South America where its larger cousin thrives".

Though I am not a good spotter, I have seen the lesser whistling teal in many areas. The most vivid memory is in the Kihim pond with hardly an acre of water, but with an abundant growth of weeds and vegetation of the type the birds relish.

It would be interesting to note if any lesser WT were located during this year's annual waterfowl census. There is no mention of this bird in the note by Dr JC Uttangi.

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# Birding in Bramhananda Reddy National Park and the Neighbouring Wetlands

*S ASHOK KUMAR, Plot 491, Road No.10, Hyderabad 500 038*

Sprawling over an area of about 400 acres, the Bramhananda Reddy National Park, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad is the remnant of a denotified forest. Since the former princely ruler occupied the area fortifying it with a long enclosed stone wall, it could retain its original character of an open scrub and light deciduous forest. Today it is an island in the midst of feverish urbanisation in its surroundings. It was saved from hungry land sharks by baptising it as a National Park.

The park encloses two small ponds, mainly rainfed serving as drinking water reservoirs for the animals and birds. The water fowl is sparse perhaps due to lack of adequate food. The hillocks and undulating dales present a dry, deciduous and mixed type of jungle. The wildlife consists of deer, foxes, rabbits, pythons and a variety of birds. The birds identified in a part of the park area are listed below.

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Family : Podicipedidae*** | |
| Little grebe or Dabchick | *Podiceps ruficollis* |
| ***Family : Phalacrocoracidae*** | |
| Little cormorant | *Phalacrocorax niger* |

***Family : Ardeidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Pond heron or Paddy bird | *Ardeola grayii* |
| Cattle egret | *Bubulcus ibis* |

***Family : Accipitridae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Pale harrier | *Circus macrourus* |
| Blackwinged kite | *Elanus caeruleus* |
| Brahminy kite | *Haliastur indus* |
| Shikra | *Accipiter badius* |

***Family : Phasianidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Grey partridge | *Francolinus pondicerianus* |
| Common peafowl | *Pavo cristatus* |

***Family : Charadriidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Redwattled lapwing | *Vanellus indicus* |
| Yellowwattled lapwing | *Vanellus malabaricus* |

***Family : Columbidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Little brown dove | *Streptopelia senegalensis* |

***Family : Cuculidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Pied crested cuckoo | *Clamator jacobinus* |
| Common hawk-cuckoo or Brain fever bird | *Cuculus varius* |
| Crow-pheasant or coucal | *Centropus sinensis* |
| Koel | *Eudynamys scolopacea* |

***Family : Alcedinidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Common kingfisher | *Alcedo atthis* |
| Whitebreasted kingfisher | *Halcyon smyrnensis* |
| Storkbilled kingfisher | *Pelargopsis capensis* |

***Family : Meropidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Common green bee-eater | *Merops orientalis* |

***Family : Coraciidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Indian roller or blue jay | *Coracias benghalensis* |

***Family : Laniidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Grey shrike | *Lanius schach* |

***Family : Dicruridae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Black drongo or king crow | *Dicrurus adsimillis* |

***Family : Sturnidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Common myna | *Acridotheres tristis* |

***Family : Corvidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| House crow | *Corvus splendens* |

***Family : Irenidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Goldmantled or Jerdon's chloropsis | *Chloropsis cochinchinensis* |

***PYCNONOTIDAE : (BULBULS)***

| | |
|---|---|
| Redvented bulbul | *Pycnonotus cafer* |
| Redwhiskered bulbul | *Pycnonotus jocosus* |

***Family : MUSCICAIDAE***

***Sub Family : Timalinae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Common babbler | *Turdoides caudatus* |
| Whiteheaded babbler | *Turdoides affinis* |
| Jungle babbler | *Turdoides striatus* |

***Subfamily : Sylviinae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Ashy wren warbler | *Prinia socialis* |
| Tailor bird | *Orthotomus sutorius* |

***Subfamily : Turdinae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Pied bushchat | *Saxicola caprata* |
| Indian robin | *Saxicoloides fulicata* |

***Family : Motacillidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Grey wagtail | *Motacilla cinerea* |
| Large pied wagtail | *Motacilla maderaspatensis* |

***Family : PLOCEIDAE***

***Subfamily : Passerinae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Yellowthroated sparrow | *Petronia xanthocollis* |

West of the park, about three kilometers away is a wetland locally called Durgamma tank. Sandwitched between two elongated hillocks and bunded on the north, the tank lies in a flat valley close to Madhapur village. Serving as an irrigation tank under the control of revenue department it has three sluices and an ayacut of 30 acres in Darga village. Virtually there is no vegetation on the eastern and western shores and the waterspread extends right upto the base of the hillocks. Acacia nilotica trees dominate the south-western foreshore beyond which lie few paddy fields irrigated by wells. There is a sprinkling of Neem (Azadiracta indica) and Tamarind (Tamarindus indicus) trees along the periphery of the foreshore. The lone Butea monosperma and the young neem tree at the edge of a paddy field are the favourite roosting places of cattle egrets. The scattered boulders in the waterspread serve as a safe haven for egrets, herons and cormorants. The village officer informed me that poaching is rare and that the fishing rights are leased to a cooperative society. The cattle grazing in the harvested fields, drongos, mynas having a piggy-back ride, cattle egrets, mynas foraging in the fields under harvest, swallows, kingfishers and rollers commanding a view from the overhead telegraphic wires is a familiar sight. The following are the birds observed in the wetland and its surroundings.

***Family : Phalacrocoracidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Large cormorant | *Phalacrocorax carbo* |
| Little cormorant | *Phalacrocorax niger* |

***Family : Ardeidae***

| | |
|---|---|
| Grey heron | *Ardea cinerea* |
| Pond heron or paddy bird | *Ardeola grayii* |
| Cattle egret | *Bubulcus ibis* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Little egret | *Egretta garzetta* |
| Large egret | *Ardea alba* |
| ***Family : Anatidae*** | |
| Cotton teal | *Nettapus coromandelianus* |
| ***Family : Accipitridae*** | |
| Marsh harrier | *Circus aeruginosus* |
| ***Family : Phasianidae*** | |
| Common peafowl | *Pavo cristatus* |
| ***Family : Charadriidae*** | |
| Redwattled lapwing | *Vanellus indicus* |
| Little ringed plover | *Charadrius dubius* |
| Common sandpiper | *Tringa hypoleucos* |
| Little stint | *Calidris minuta* |
| ***Family : Columbidae*** | |
| Red turtle dove | Streptopelia tranquebarica |
| Spotted dove | Streptopelia chinensis |
| Little brown dove | *Streptopelia senegalenesis* |
| ***Family : Psittacidae*** | |
| Alaxandrine or the large parakeet | *Psittacula eupatria* |
| Roseringed parakeet | *Psittacula krameri* |
| ***Family : Cuculidae*** | |
| Crow pheasant or coucal | *Centropus sinensis* |
| ***Family : Alcedinidae*** | |
| Common kingfisher | *Alcedo atthis* |
| Lesser pied kingfisher | *Ceryle rudis* |
| Whitebreasted kingfisher | *Halcyon smyrnensis* |
| ***Family : Meropidae*** | |
| Common green bee-eater | *Merops orientalis* |
| Blue-tailed bee-eater | *Merops philippinus* |
| ***Family : Coraciidae*** | |
| Indian roller or b luejay | *Coracias benghalensis* |
| ***Family : Upupidae*** | |
| Hoopoe | *Uupa epops* |
| ***Family : Picidae*** | |
| Lesser goldenbacked woodpecker | *Dinopium benghalensis* |
| ***Family : Hirundinidae*** | |
| Common swallow | *Hirundo rustica* |
| ***Family : Oriolidae*** | |
| Golden oriole | *Oriolus oriolus* |
| ***Family : Dicruridae*** | |
| Black drongo | *Dicrurus adsimilis* |
| ***Family : Sturnidae*** | |
| Common myna | *Acridotheres tristis* |

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Family : Pycnonotidae*** | |
| Redvented bulbul | *Pycnonotus cafer* |
| ***Family : MUSCICAPIDAE*** | |
| ***Subfamily : Timalinae*** | |
| Common babbler | *Turdoides caudatus* |
| ***Subfamily : Rurdinae*** | |
| Indian robiñ | *Saxicoloides fulicata* |
| ***Family : Motacillidae*** | |
| Grey wagtail | *Motacilla cinerea* |
| Large pied wagtail | *Motacilla maderaspatensis* |

It is painful to note that almost all the paddy fields abutting the foreshore are under active conversion into residential plots and roads. Rock blasting, bull dozing, plying of trucks, and labour activity are instances of biotic interference. It is feared that the lake foreshore may gradually be encroached upon affecting the lake ecosystem.

Hardly a kilometer away is a small wetland called Tummadi tank of Khanamet village, with an ayacut of 30 acres. It also serves as drinking water pond for cattle. On the western foreshore is a wide growth of reeds which provides roosting and nesting place for purple moorhens. Areawise this wetland is smaller and therefore has sparse waterfowl. Since it is away from the busy road, the birds are not disturbed. The birds found in this wetland are detailed below:

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Family : Podicipedidae*** | |
| Little grebe or dabchick | *Podiceps ruficollis* |
| ***Family : Phalacrocoracidae*** | |
| Little cormorant | *Phalacrocorax niger* |
| ***Family : Ardeidae*** | |
| Cattle egret | *Bubulcus ibis* |
| Little egret | *Egretta garzetta* |
| ***Family : Anatidae*** | |
| Cotton teal | *Nettapus coromandelianus* |
| ***Family : Accipitridae*** | |
| Marsh harrier | *Circus aeruginosus* |
| ***Family : Rallidae*** | |
| Purple moorhen | *Porphyrio porphyrio* |
| Coot | *Fulica atra* |
| Whitebreasted waterhen | *Amaurornis phoenicurus* |
| ***Family : Charadriidae*** | |
| Redwattled lapwing | *Vanellus indicus* |
| ***Family : Alcedinidae*** | |
| Common kingfisher | *Alcedo atthis* |
| ***Family : Hirundinidae*** | |
| Common swallow | *Hirundo rustica* |

After cruising 8 kilometers west, I reached Maipur village on N.H.9. Lying close to the highway on the eastern side is a large fresh water lake. On the western foreshore are a few Eucalyptus trees on which were found a large flock of common babblers. On the northern side there is habitation while on the southern side is the surplus weir of the tank. The far northern side is covered by reeds and floating vegetation amidst which flocks of ducks were found. The rock projections in the midst of the tank serve as roosting and nesting ground for cormorants, herons and duck. The sound of crackers heralding the Telugu New Year disturbed the waterfowl which often took to wing, circle overhead, land and again get air borne. The following birds were found in the above wet land.

***Family : Podicipedidae***
Dabchick

***Family : Phalacrocoracidae***
Little cormorant

***Family : Ardeidae***
Pond heron

Little egret

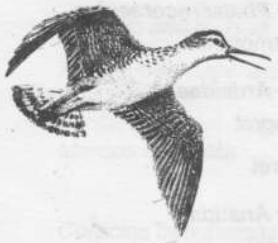
***Family : Anatidae***
Pintail

Cotton teal

Shoveller

Garganey teal

Redcrested pochard



***Family : Accipitridae***
Marsh harrier

***Family : Ralliadae***
Coot

Whitebreasted waterhen

***Family : Recurvirostridae***
Blackwinged stilt

***Family : Charadriidae***
Redwattled lapwing

Six kilometers north of Miapur is a fresh water lake known as Bachpalli tank. It is crescent shaped and encircled on three sides by hillocks. The wetland is bounded on the west by Medchal road. On the eastern side is the tank bund dotted by Tamarind and Acacia trees. Hemming the southern shore is a boundary stone wall separating the cultivated fields from the tank. Being in the interior it provides a safe haven for the waterfowl. Enquiries revealed that occasional duck shooting by outsiders takes place and that fishing is moderate. The waterfowl seen in this wetland are given below:

***Family : Podicipedidae***
Little grebe or Dabchick

***Family : Phalacrocoracidae***
Little cormorant

***Family : Ardeidae***
Cattle egret

***Little egret Egretta garzetta***
Large egret

***Family : Anatidae***
Pintail

Cotton teal

***Family : Rallidae***
Purple moorhen

Coot

***Family : Recurvirostridae***
Blackwinged stilt

***Family : Charadriidae***
Redwattled lapwing

Common sandpiper

***Family : Hirundinidae***
Common swallow

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# World Birdwatch - 95

*MS ORUS ILLYAS, Centre for Wildlife and Ornithology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202 002*

Birds always fascinate me. It was a great day for me when I got an invitation to participate in "World Birdwatch-95".

World Birdwatch-95 was a global event meant to publicize the need for conservation of birds and their habitat. It was organised by the UK based organisation "Birdlife International" on 7th and 8th October 1995. The aim of this birdwatching programme was to make people aware about the need for conservation.

The Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) was one of the sites where Birdwatch-95 was organised. The programme was coordinated by officials of the UP Forest Department and supported by private resorts located near CTR.

The organisers extended invitations to several interested birdwatchers. A team of five persons participated from our Centre. Our team divided itself into two groups. One group operated at Kaladhungi and the other was given the area